The Fragile Sword: Rajput Claims Among Agrarian Communities - Vol 1

Author- Siddharth Nigam, Rakesh Upadhaya, Manoj Singh Pundir, Rishi Gaikwad.

INTRODUCTION:

Caste in South Asia has long been framed as a system of fixed hierarchies—ritual status mapped to occupation, birth, and notions of purity. Yet the social reality, especially across regions of Central India and the Deccan, often defies such rigidity. Among the most revealing cases are communities whose identities hover between the celebrated status of the Rajput Kshatriya and the localized worlds of agrarian castes, pastoral groups, and tribal formations. These are castes of mixed, regionalized, or contested Rajput origin—groups whose claims to Rajput ancestry are neither wholly accepted nor entirely fabricated.

This book explores the cultural worlds of such communities: the Jadams of the Narmada Valley, the Raghuvanshis (Raghvi) caste of Chhindwara, the Daharias of Chhattisgarh, and the Powars of the Wainganga Basin, among others. These groups invoke genealogical ties to well-known Rajput dynasties—Yaduvanshi-Jadaun, Raghuvanshi, Haihaiya, Panwar—and embody elements of Rajput identity through ritual, clan structure, martial memory, and symbolic codes of status. Yet their lived caste status is often shaped by historical migration, intermarriage, regional assimilation, and shifting political economies, rather than strict varna affiliation.

From an anthropological perspective, these communities offer a compelling lens into how caste is constructed and reimagined over time. They challenge the notion of caste as a static order and instead illustrate it as a negotiated identity—one that is historically contingent, regionally shaped, and deeply responsive to both opportunity and exclusion. Their social strategies—such as the adoption of sacred

thread ceremonies, genealogical storytelling, or sectarian movements—reflect efforts to assert dignity and belonging in a social world where lineage and legitimacy are constantly under scrutiny.

This work does not seek to validate or disprove claims to Rajput heritage. Rather, it engages these claims as cultural narratives that illuminate the fluidity of caste boundaries and the ways in which communities anchor themselves within (or adjacent to) dominant traditions. These stories are not anomalies; they are part of the broader structure of caste in India—one that is not simply inherited, but lived, narrated, and adapted across generations.

By centering such communities, this study calls for a more nuanced understanding of caste—one that attends to its historical plasticity, regional variability, and symbolic dimensions, especially in zones where social mobility and marginality intersect.

Regarding the impure castes of Rajputs in Central India, *The Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces* by R.V. Russell states that:

"The bulk of the Rajputs in the Central Provinces are of very impure blood. Several groups, such as the Panwars of the Wainganga Valley, the Raghuvansis of Chhindwara and Nagpur, the Jadams of Hoshangabad and the Daharias of Chhattlsgarh, have developed into separate castes and marry among themselves, though a true Rajput must not marry in his own clan. Some of them have abandoned the sacred thread and now rank with the good cultivating castes below Banias."

In the following sections, we will take an in-depth look at these castes—such as the Powars, Raghuvanshis, Jadams, and Daharias—tracing their origins, historical transformations, and the processes through which they evolved from Rajput clans into distinct caste groups, as well as how they became agricultural castes. We will also explore their present-day social status, cultural practices, regional variations, and the factors that contributed to their separation from

the mainstream Rajput identity. This examination aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their unique position within the complex social structure of the Central Provinces.

Historically, Rajputs—traditionally identified as the warrior and ruling class within the varna system—were primarily responsible for warfare and governance. However, during periods of political inactivity or in the absence of military engagements, many Rajputs turned to agriculture as a secondary occupation. Classical texts such as the *Manusmriti* recognize agriculture as primarily a Vaishya duty, yet they also acknowledge its adoption by ruling classes under certain circumstances. Ethnographic and historical studies further indicate that, when deprived of political power or martial roles, Rajput groups often sustained themselves through agrarian livelihoods, gradually integrating into the socio-economic fabric as landholding or cultivating castes. Nevertheless, to confirm this with greater certainty, further research is required.

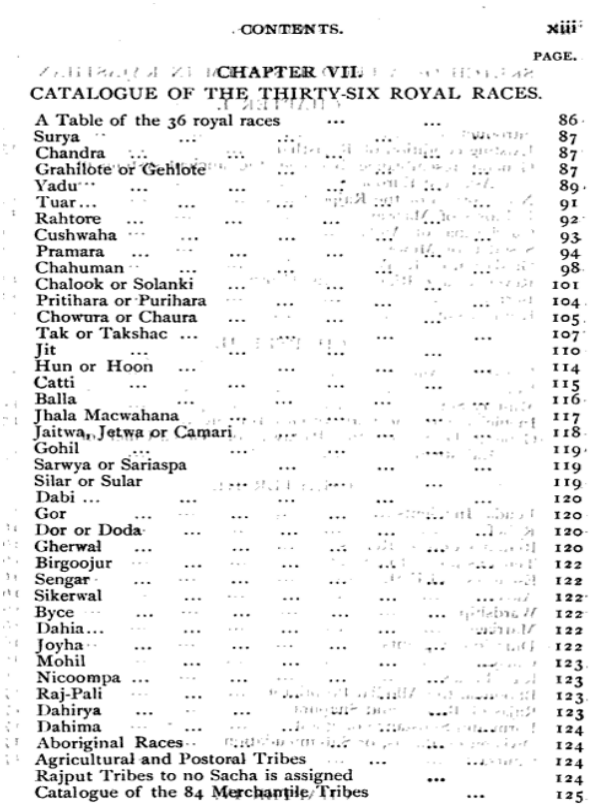
Many times, for various reasons, if a Rajput was outcast by the Rajput community, he would marry into a different caste. Owing to the high status of Rajputs, many lower castes often assimilated outcast Rajputs into their own communities. Additionally, many castes without any actual connection to Rajputs adopted Rajput surnames to claim higher social status—most commonly, servants from lower castes adopted the surnames of their Rajput masters. Later, they claimed descent from Rajput lineage to elevate their social standing. This process was part of Rajputization, which is similar to Sanskritization, but with the specific aim of becoming identified as Rajput.

There are many castes who claim Rajput descent, and whose main occupation is agriculture. In this discussion, we will look at some of them, as it is not possible to study all of them at once due to their large number.

Daharia Rajput

Origin and Ancestry

The Daharias are a caste of Rajput descent, found primarily in the Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh, with a small population. They trace their lineage to the illustrious Rajput clans but have since evolved into a distinct endogamous caste, diverging from the exogamous norms that typify traditional Rajput marital customs. This transition from clan to caste illustrates a broader phenomenon of status transformation among martial groups in Central India.



CONTENTS. xiii

PAGE.

CHAPTER VII.

CATALOGUE OF THE THIRTY-SIX ROYAL RACES.

A Table of the 36 royal races 86
Surya 87
Chandra 87
Grahilote or Gehlote 87
Yadu 89
Tuar 91
Rahtore 92
Cushwaha 93
Pramara 94
Chahuman 98
Chalook or Solanki 101
Pritihara or Purihara 104
Chowura or Chaura 105
Tak or Takshac 107
Jit 110
Hun or Hoon 114
Catti 115
Balla 116
Jhala Macwahana 117
Jaitwa, Jetwa or Camari 118
Gohil 119
Sarwya or Sariaspa 119
Silar or Sular 119
Dabi 120
Gor 120
Dor or Doda 120
Gherwal 120
Birgoojur 122
Sengar 122
Sikerwal 122
Byce 122
Dahia 122
Joyha 122
Mohil 123
Nicoompa 123
Raj-Pali 123
Dahirya 123
Dahima 124
Aboriginal Races 124
Agricultural and Postoral Tribes 124
Rajput Tribes to no Sacha is assigned ... 124
Catalogue of the 84 Merchantile Tribes ... 125

Renowned historian Colonel James Tod classified the Daharias among the "thirty-six royal races" of Rajasthan, affirming their historical nobility. Their name likely originates from *Dahar* or *Dahal*, the ancient term for the Jubbulpore (modern Jabalpur) region, once a stronghold of the Haihaya or Kalachuri Rajput kings of Tripura (Tewar). This dynasty is known to have inaugurated its own calendar era in A.D. 248, and it endured until at least the 10th or 11th century.

The medieval geographer Alberuni (b. A.D. 973) referenced Dahal and its ruler Gangeya Deva. His son, Kama Daharia, is credited with temple construction in Karanbel and Bilahri near Jubbulpore and is considered the eponymous forefather of the Daharia Rajputs.

Migration and Alternate Origin Stories

Historical and genealogical links suggest that the Daharias migrated from Jubbulpore into Chhattisgarh during the ascendancy of the Kalachuri dynasty of Ratanpur, which maintained close ties with the Kalachuris of Tewar. This political and dynastic affiliation likely facilitated the movement of Rajput clans, such as the Daharias, into the relatively fertile and strategically important plains of Chhattisgarh. However, over generations, the Daharias appear to have lost the collective memory of this noble origin. Instead, they now preserve a range of alternative oral traditions to explain their ancestry—an anthropological phenomenon frequently observed among caste groups undergoing status shifts or geographical dislocation.

One such oral tradition claims descent from ancient Kshatriya warriors who fled the wrath of the Brahmin ascetic Parashurama, believed in Hindu mythology to have annihilated the warrior class multiple times. These fleeing warriors are said to have disguised themselves as wayfarers—hence the term *Daharia*, derived from *dahar* (meaning "road" in Chhattisgarhi)—to escape detection. Another variation attributes the name to *dahri*, or "gate," suggesting that the title was bestowed upon them by Bimbaji Bhonsla for their valor in defending the gates of Ratanpur. However, historical records challenge this latter narrative, as they indicate that Ratanpur capitulated without resistance during the Maratha conquest.

From an anthropological standpoint, these divergent origin myths illustrate a process of cultural negotiation and identity reconstruction. As the Daharias became distanced—both geographically and socially—from their original Rajput kin, they began to formulate localized narratives that anchored their identity within the new socio-political context of Chhattisgarh. This is a common phenomenon among groups undergoing what anthropologist M.N. Srinivas termed "status mobility," particularly within the fluid caste hierarchies of Central India.

Furthermore, a geographically and historically plausible origin links the Daharias to Baghelkhand or Rewah, regions situated between Jubbulpore and Chhattisgarh. These areas continue to host significant populations of Kalachuri Rajputs, supporting the hypothesis of a Kalachuri–Daharia migration corridor. The presence of shared cultural practices, kinship terms, and even agricultural traditions between the Daharias and Rajput groups in Rewah and Jubbulpore lends ethnographic support to this theory. In this light, the Daharias represent a classic example of a Rajput-derived caste that has, over time, localized its identity while retaining traces of its aristocratic ancestry through both oral tradition and ritual practice.

Clans, Marriage Practices, and Social Structure

Although the Daharias have become endogamous over time, they retain an internal structure of exogamous septs (clans), many of which bear the names of traditional Rajput lineages, including Bais, Chandel, Baghel, Bisen, Bundela, Chauhan, Parihar, and Rathor. These associations emphasize their Rajput heritage. At the same time, the community exhibits evidence of social assimilation; several septs and subsepts are either non-Rajput or reflect occupational, regional, or personal characteristics.

Subsepts include Brahminical gotras such as Parashar, Bharadwaj, and Shandilya, as well as descriptive titles like Kachariha (“one who does not mind a beating”), Atariha, and Hiyas. The complexity and diversity of these groupings point to multiple waves of integration over time, possibly including individuals from other castes or social backgrounds who were assimilated into the Daharia identity.

Unlike orthodox Rajputs, the Daharias sometimes permit first-cousin marriages due to the small size of their community. They also practice hypergamy: higher-status septs like Mainpuri Chauhan, Bais, Bisen, Surkhi, and Hiyas accept brides from lower septs but do not

reciprocate. This results in a pattern where high-status men may take multiple wives from other groups, while families from lower septs often pay significant dowries to secure upward alliances.

Customs and Rituals

The Daharias observe strict social rules in line with upper-caste norms. Divorce and widow remarriage are taboo, and any woman violating caste codes is permanently expelled. Their wedding customs reveal a blend of Rajput and local traditions, marked by symbolic rituals:

- The bridegroom wears a white robe and carries a dagger, both for warding off evil spirits and as a symbolic proxy in case of his absence.
- The bride, before the ceremony, visits women in the community who offer blessings and symbolic gifts such as a flower garland, wooden doll, or rice.
- A wedding rite involves the couple walking around a sacred post (usually seven times), during which the groom touches the bride’s toe to knock over rice cups—symbolizing fertility.
- Vermilion is applied to the bride's forehead, and her head is ceremonially veiled by the groom, marking her transition into married life.

Marriage rituals also feature localized customs like the bridegroom’s oil-and-turmeric purification, threading ceremonies conducted by Brahmins, and symbolic washing with twenty-one water-filled vessels.

Guru affiliation plays a spiritual role, but a husband and wife must not share the same guru, as disciples of a guru are considered spiritual siblings. Their customs and traditions have largely been localized, as they have abandoned most of their distinct Rajput customs; however, a slight trace still remains.

Present-Day Occupation and Social Standing

In contemporary society, the Daharias primarily engage in agriculture, often as village proprietors or tenant farmers. Their aversion to manual plowing aligns with their martial heritage; instead, they perform supervisory roles in agrarian settings. While a few work as constables or village officials (*chuprassies*), they generally avoid lower-status occupations and manual labor.

Among them, dietary practices vary—some are strict vegetarians, while others include non-vegetarian food in their diet. Their food habits are considered semi-orthodox: although they consume meat, it is typically limited to clean animals, and they generally abstain from alcohol, onions, and tomatoes, which are often avoided in ritual or orthodox households. These practices reflect a blend of traditional values and localized customs. In terms of physical appearance, they are often described as having fair complexions, sharp facial features, and tall, robust builds, which are believed to be markers of their Rajput ancestry and martial heritage.

Although they are no longer formally recognized as orthodox Rajputs, the Daharias continue to enjoy a relatively high status within the local caste hierarchy. One significant indicator of this status is that Brahmins still accept water from them—a traditional measure of ritual purity and social acceptance. The Daharias claim descent from the Kshatriya varna of the Hindu social order, associating themselves with the warrior class. However, over time, they have come to be classified alongside other 'good cultivating castes'—a term used for middle-ranking agrarian communities in the rural social structure of Chhattisgarh. Despite this reclassification, the community has retained elements of its martial heritage. They continue to venerate swords as sacred symbols of bravery and warriorhood, especially during the Dasahra festival, when rituals highlighting valor and ancestral pride are prominently observed.

Jadam

The Jadam is a Hindu caste descended from a small group of Chandravanshi–Yaduvanshi Jadaun Rajputs. They are primarily found in Hoshangabad and neighboring districts of Madhya Pradesh and are believed to have settled in the region 700–800 years ago after migrating from the Karauli State in Rajasthan. Their primary occupation is agriculture.

Origins and Ancestry

According to their own accounts, a small group of Jadaun Rajputs migrated to Hoshangabad from the Karauli State of Rajasthan around 700 years ago. Due to the absence or low population of other Rajput clans in the region, these Jadaun Rajputs developed over 52 gotras (exogamous sections) to regulate marriages. As a result, they evolved into a distinct caste, marrying within their own community but with members of different gotras.

Some scholars believe that the Jadam caste may have originated from a Jadaun Rajput father and a woman from another caste or tribe, thereby rendering them ‘degraded’ Rajputs. Some oral traditions assert that a small group of Jadaun Rajput men migrated from Karauli around 700 years ago, initially as raiders, before eventually settling as agriculturalists. Since they did not bring their wives, they took local women from other castes and tribes as spouses, which, in the eyes of orthodox Rajput society, led to their loss of caste status. Over generations, they evolved into a caste with their own distinct identity. The Jadaun Rajputs of North India do not intermarry with them, viewing them as socially inferior.

Both theories of origin are equally accepted, and it is difficult to determine which one is more accurate, although members of the community consider the first theory more convincing.

A subcaste named Jadam is also present in the Gurjar caste, possibly originating from intermarriage between Jadam Rajputs and Gurjars. The Kirars sometimes also claim descent from these Jadam Rajputs.

Colonel Tod described the Yaduvanshis as the most illustrious of all Indian tribes, identifying them as descendants of Budha, progenitor of the Lunar race. Krishna, a key figure in this lineage, was born into the Yaduvanshi tribe, and his son Bharat is traditionally believed to be the namesake of Bharatavarsha (India). A mythological story tells of Krishna's desire to prevent future conflicts among the rapidly multiplying Yaduvanshis. He tricked a companion into impersonating a pregnant woman and brought him to the irascible sage Durvasa. Angered, the sage prophesied the birth of a pestle that would destroy the Yaduvanshis. A pestle miraculously appeared, and when the Yaduvanshis tried to destroy it, its sawdust gave rise to tall elephant grass. A feud later broke out, and the Yaduvanshis killed each other using this grass. Only one woman survived; her son later became king of Mathura, founding the tribe's present lineage. Another group, including Krishna, fled to Gujarat and built the temple of Dwarka at a site called Jagat Khant.

In conclusion, the origins of the Jadam caste remain uncertain, with two primary theories offering possible explanations. One suggests that they are descendants of Jadaun Rajputs who migrated to Hoshangabad and gradually evolved into a distinct caste through the formation of separate gotras. The other posits that they are of mixed origin, born from unions between Jadaun Rajput men and local women, which led to their exclusion from orthodox Rajput status and resulted in their classification as "degraded Rajputs." While both theories hold some merit, the community itself tends to favor the first account—of pure Rajput descent maintained through regional isolation and the development of distinct gotras.

There is also a subcaste and a section named Jadam among the Ahirs, which is found in Madhya Pradesh.

Subdivisions and Social Structure

The Jadams are divided into two major endogamous groups:

- Kachhotia: Predominantly found in the Sohagpur tehsil, believed to be descendants of irregular unions and hence lower in status.
- Adhodia: Found in Seoni and Harda, this group considers itself superior to the Kachhotia.

These subdivisions do not intermarry. The caste is said to include fifty-two exogamous gotras or sections, though the number is likely symbolic. Most section names derive from ancestral villages, though some exhibit totemic connections. For instance, the Semaria Jadams are linked to the village Semaria and also revere the semar (cotton tree), reflecting animistic traditions.

Marriage Customs and Social Norms

Infant marriage is practiced among the Jadams, though marrying after puberty does not incur penalties. Polygamy is common, especially among farming households, as wives are considered more reliable workers than hired labor.

If a girl becomes pregnant before marriage, a simple ceremony called gunda is conducted—she gives a ring or garlands the man. A caste feast is held to validate the union. Widow remarriage is permitted but carries stigma, being called Kukar-gauna ('dog marriage'). Divorce is fairly frequent; the new husband often reimburses the old one for previous marriage expenses. Some women are reported to have had as many as ten or twelve husbands.

Since their migration, they have abandoned most of their Rajput customs and adopted many local ones, yet some of their customs and traditions remain exclusive to their caste in that region.

Occupation and Economic Life

Agriculture is the principal occupation. Jadams work as landowners, tenants, and laborers and are noted for their efficient farming practices. Women participate actively in fieldwork, and the caste allows consumption of food cooked with water in the fields, unlike stricter upper castes. They eat meat and fish, including wild pig, but abstain from alcohol.

They observe moderate ritual purity and take cooked food only from Jijhotia or Sanadhya Brahmans, who serve as their family priests. These Brahmans accept water from Jadams only in metal vessels, not in earthenware—reflecting residual caste distinctions.

Dress and Gender Roles

Jadam women wear a unique dress called sawang—a six-foot skirt with a long cloth wrapped over the waist and shoulders. They sport prominent forehead spangles, more noticeable than those of neighboring communities. Women enjoy relative freedom, often accompanying their husbands to market to prevent them from being cheated.

Religious Beliefs and Totemism

Jadams follow mainstream Hindu practices alongside totemic traditions. Boys are invested with the sacred thread at marriage, which may originally have been a puberty rite rather than a purely Brahmanical initiation.

Totemism plays a cultural role. The Semaria Jadams, for instance, revere the semar tree and avoid harming it. Such customs indicate tribal or animistic roots.

Powar

The Powar (also known as Ponwar, Panwar, or Pawar) is a Hindu agricultural and landowning caste primarily settled in the Balaghat, Seoni, Bhandara, and Gondia districts of the Central Provinces of India. They claim to be descendants of the Panwar Rajputs of Malwa and are believed to have migrated from western Malwa to the Central Provinces in the 17th or 18th century. After settling in the Wainganga Valley, they became primarily agriculturists and landowners.

Origin and Ancestry

According to their own claims, the Powar community originated from the Parmar clan of the Agnivansha branch of the Kshatriyas. They are believed to have emerged approximately 2,500 years before the Common Era (BCE). The community traces its roots to Mount Abu in Rajasthan, where, in ancient times, sages and ascetics—guided by the sage Vasishtha—created a sacred fire pit (Agnikund). Through their efforts, four Kshatriya clans were formed: Parmar, Chauhan, Parihar, and Solanki. Thus, the Powars claim descent from the Parmar clan of the Agnivanshi Rajputs.

R.V. Russell, in The Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces, while examining the clans of the Powars, stated that:

"Some of these have the names of Rajput clans, while others are derived from villages, titles or names of offices, or from other castes. Among the titular names are Chaudhri (headman), Patlia (patel or chief officer of a village) and Sonwania (one who purifies offenders among the Gonds and other tribes). Among the names of other castes are Bopcha or Korku, Bhoyar (a caste of cultivators), Pardhi (hunter), Kohli (a local cultivating caste) and Sahria (from the Saonr tribe)."

Many scholars of the Powar caste claim that they are genuine Rajputs descended from the Panwar Rajputs of Malwa, while some assert that they originated from a group of 36 Rajput clans, with each Powar clan tracing its lineage to a different Rajput clan—thus enabling inter-clan marriages. However, both of these claims lack genealogical and historical evidence. Furthermore, contemporary genealogists of the Powars maintain only that the Powars are Panwar Rajputs and reject the second theory of descent from a group of 36 Rajput clans.

In the census data of the British colonial era, the Powars were mistakenly identified as pure Panwar Rajputs. As a result, many documents from that period recorded the Powars as Panwar Rajputs. Even the gazetteers published at the time repeated this error. Consequently, many came to falsely believe that the Powars were pure Panwar Rajputs. However, the gotra of the Panwar Rajputs is "Vashistha," and they marry only within the Rajput community, observing strict exogamy based on clan and gotra. In contrast, the Powar caste is a completely distinct group that marries exclusively within its thirty-six clans. This clear distinction between the Powars and the Panwar Rajputs raises questions about the Powars' claim to genuine Rajput status. Nevertheless, it is likely that when they first arrived in the Central Provinces—prior to intermixing with non-Rajput communities—they were of pure Rajput lineage. Over time, however, their lineage became significantly mixed.

Modern historians suggest that the Powars should be considered an impure tribe of Rajputs. The Powars marry among themselves, a practice that a pure Rajput would not follow. It is said that when they first arrived in the Central Provinces, they did not bring their wives; hence, they married women from other castes, preferably Gonds, Korkus, Halbas, and Baigas. Historian Dr. Manju Awasthi suggests that the Powar caste may be purely Shudra or (□□□□□□□□□□), degraded from its original Kshatriya varna. They have two subdivisions: Powar and Rahadya Powar (also called Choti Pangat),

with the latter being considered lower in status due to their mixed origin.

PAWAR

Groups/subgroups: Kshatri Pawar, Rahadya Pawar [Madhya Pradesh]

Surnames: Bhagat, Bisen, Ede, Katre, Parihar, Patel, Pawar, Rahangdale, Temnhare [Madhya Pradesh]

Exogamous units/clans: Bhagat, Bhoyar, Bisen, Ede, Katre, Parihar, Patel, Rahangole, Temnhare, Thakre [Madhya Pradesh]

In “Communities, Segments, Synonyms, Surnames and Titles” by Kumar Suresh Singh, two subdivisions of the Powars are mentioned: the Kshatri Powar and the Rahadya Powar.

The Rahadya Powar subdivision may have formed due to intermarriages between Powars and tribes of very low status or impure origin. Due to their mixed origin, these Powars were historically considered inferior in status. However, at present, both subdivisions are believed to have assimilated into each other, and it is now difficult to distinguish the Rahadya Powars.

The Powar caste consists of thirty-six exogamous sections within which they marry. Some of these sections bear the names of Rajput clans, while others are derived from villages, titles, names of offices, other castes, or indigenous tribes that developed after the Powars settled in the Central Provinces. In mixed-origin castes, clan names are typically derived from the caste or tribe of the outsiders who joined the group, rather than from a specific clan name of the outsider. For example, if a person from the Pardhi or Bopchi (Korku) tribe—whose clan name is "XYZ"—is assimilated into the caste, the new clan that emerges is usually named after the tribe (Pardhi or Bopchi), not the specific clan name "XYZ" of the outsider. This pattern is similarly observed in many other castes of mixed origin, and the Powars are no different. Most of the clans of the Powars and other mixed-origin castes are derived in this way.

The Bisen, Bhoyar, Chauhan, Gautam, and Parihar clans may have Rajput origins. The Patle, Bhagat, Thakre, Katre, and Sonawane clans may have tribal origins. “Patle” may have originated from “Bhil Patelia,” “Bhagat” from “Bhil Bhagat,” “Thakre” from “Bhil Thakar/Thakur,” “Katre” from “Bhil Kataria,” and “Sonawane” from “Bhil Sonawane.” The Bhagat, Katara, and Kohari/Cohari/Kohli clans are also present among the Bhil Patelia tribe. The Patle, Bhagat, and Thakre clans are likewise found among the Bhil Pawara tribe, a sub-tribe of the Bhils that claims mixed Panwar Rajput and Bhil ancestry. The Kshirsagar and Sonawane clans may have links to the Mahadeo Koli caste. Additionally, all these tribes continue to be found in significant numbers in the western Malwa region.

The Baghel, Chauhan, and Rawat clans are also found in the Bhilala tribe of western Malwa, which is considered a mixed tribe that originated from a small group of male Rajputs who intermixed with female Bhils. Additionally, the Katara and Rana clans are found in the Meena tribe of the same region.

The Pardhi clan is derived from the Pardhi caste, the Kolhe clan from the Kohli/Koli caste, the Bopche clan from the Korku tribe, and the Sahare clan from the Saharia tribe.

The Kohli caste of the Wainganga Valley has a clan named Sahare, and the Powars also have a clan with the same name, along with a clan named Kohli/Kohle.

The Turk/Turkh/Turkar, Rehmat, and Farid clans may have Muslim origins, possibly due to contact between some Powars and Muslim groups.

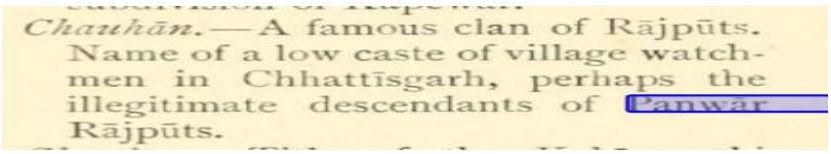
The Baghel/Baghele, Chauhan, Chaudhary, Kataria, Powar, Patle, Rawat, Sahare, and Thakur/Thakre clans are also found in the Lodhi caste in regions where the Powars reside. Additionally, the Bisne (Bisen) and Thakre clans are found in the Marar (Mali) caste in the same areas.

The presence of the Baghel, Bisen, Sahare, Powar, and Rana clans in the Halba tribe of Bhandara may indicate that the Powars have also intermixed with the Halbas. The caste division of Badi Pangat and Choti Pangat is also present in the Halba tribe, similar to the Powars. Both communities worship Dulha Deo.

There is a tribe named Ganda or Gada in Chhattisgarh, which has two subcastes: Chauhan Ganda and Saharia Ganda. These subcastes may have originated from the illegitimate descendants of the Chauhan and Sahare clans of the Powars, who may have married Ganda women. This theory can be considered plausible, as the Chauhan and Sahare subcastes are not found together in any other indigenous tribe of the Central Provinces except for the Ganda tribe. Additionally, the worship of Dulha Deo is common among the Gandas, Powars, Halbas, and many other indigenous tribes in India, indicating a connection between the Powars and indigenous tribes. Some decades ago, a few members of the tribe began identifying themselves as Chauhan.

Some members of the community claim that the Chaudhary, Pund, Hirankhede, Sonawane, Katre, and Ambule clans hold a lower status among the Powars, allegedly because these clans, in the past, took women from the local Gond, Korku, Baiga, or Dhimar tribes. There is no concrete evidence to support these claims, and opinions on the matter remain divided. Additionally, some members of the Patle clan do not take wives from the Katre clan, though it is unknown why or whether this applies to all members of the Patle clan or only a few who follow this practice. Further research is necessary to determine the validity of these claims, as they could be either true or false.

There is also a small caste of village watchmen in Chhattisgarh called Chauhan. They may have originated from the illegitimate descendants of the Chauhan clan of the Powars or the Rajput Chauhans.



Chauhān.—A famous clan of Rājpūts. Name of a low caste of village watchmen in Chhattīsgarh, perhaps the illegitimate descendants of Panwār Rājpūts.

Some Powars claim to be descended from a group of Rajputs from 36 different clans that once lived in Malwa, and that the 36 clans of Powars originated from them. However, this remains merely a claim, as there are no genealogies or any other evidence to support it. While some of them claim to have genealogical proof, we cannot consider any claim to be true without examining it.

If we exclude the Bisen, Bhoyar, Chauhan, Gautam, Parihar, Jaitwar, and a few other clans with Rajput origins, the remaining clans may have originated from indigenous tribes or other castes. Many of their clan names seem to have been derived from castes and tribes that historically resided near the Powars, particularly during their time in Malwa. Moreover, the Powar caste undoubtedly has a mixed origin.

As of now, we cannot conclude the origin of the Powars, but it is evident that they are Rajputs of mixed origin. After studying their 36 clans, it appears that not all of them are of Panwar Rajput descent. A few clans may be descended from other Rajput clans such as the Chauhans and Parihars, as these clan names are also found among the Powars, while others may have originated from indigenous and forest tribes or other such lower castes.

Several Powar clan names are shared with other local communities, both in their earlier settlements in Malwa and in their current location in the Wainganga Valley, indicating that they intermixed with other communities both before and after their migration. Many of these names also resemble those found among other castes and tribes, suggesting a history of mixed origins.

According to the oral traditions of the people, they believe they are descendants of King Bhoja of the Panwar dynasty and claim descent directly from the Panwar Rajputs of the Malwa region. However, there is no definite evidence to support this claim, and a major question arises as to how the descendants of a single Panwar clan developed thirty-six clans that intermarry with each other.

Migration and Settlement

According to the Central Provinces District Gazetteers – Bhandara:

"At the end of the tenth century a part of Bhandara may have been included in the dominions of the Pramaras or Ponwars of Malwa. The Prashasti or stone inscription of Sitabaldi, dated 1104-1105 A.D., mentions one Lakshma Deva who is supposed to have been a viceroy at Nagpur for the Malwa king [Central Provinces Gazetteer (1870), Introduction, page no. Dr. Kielhorn, however, considers (Epigraphia Indica, Volume II, Part 12, page 180) that he was himself king of Malwa.]. It is possible that the existing Ponwar caste of Nagpur and Bhandara, who have obviously been settled in the Province for a long period and have abandoned the customs of Rajputs, are a relic of the temporary dominance of the kings of Malwa."

It is further stated that:

"The only evidence for holding that Bhandara was included in their territories is the residence of a large number of Ponwars in the District at present, but it is possible that the caste may have emigrated eastwards from Nagardhan in later times. According to their own traditions their first settlement was at Nagardhan in Nagpur, already mentioned in connection with the Shail kings."

According to this theory, at the end of the tenth century, part of the Bhandara region may have been under the control of the Paramaras of Malwa. The Sitabaldi inscription from 1104–1105 A.D. mentions Lakshma Deva, who may have been a viceroy at Nagpur for the Malwa king, although Dr. Kielhorn believed he was the king of Malwa himself. It is possible that the present-day Powar caste of Nagpur and Bhandara—who have clearly lived in the region for a long time and no longer follow traditional Rajput customs—are descendants of that period of Malwa dominance.

The main evidence supporting this theory is the large number of Powars still living in the area. However, it is also possible that they migrated eastward later from Nagardhan, which, according to their tradition, was their first settlement. Nagardhan is also historically linked to the earlier Shail kings, suggesting a layered and evolving Rajput presence in the region.

Some scholars claim that they migrated from western Malwa to the Central Provinces in the 17th century. It is believed that they initially settled in Nagardhan, passing through the regions of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand, and later moved to the Balaghat, Seoni, Bhandara, and Gondia districts of the Central Provinces.

According to their own accounts, the Powar caste initially settled in Nagardhan, an older town than Nagpur and once the headquarters of the locality. Legend has it that the first settlers, lacking wives, were permitted to take widows from other castes into their households. While it is likely that something of this nature occurred, they probably did not limit themselves to widows alone.

In typical Rajput genealogies written by Bhat genealogists, the names of male members, along with their wives' names, their sons' names, their daughters' names, and even their wives' fathers' names, are recorded—in short, the names of all family members, both male and female, are documented. However, the genealogies of the few Powar families that exist today contain only the names of male members, with not a single female name recorded. This often happens when a Rajput marries outside his caste, as Bhat genealogists traditionally do not document the names of outsiders.

This suggests that when the Powars arrived in the Central Provinces, they may have come without their women and subsequently taken wives from the local castes and tribes of the region. Additionally, it is possible that their daughters married outsiders, and as these outsiders

were assimilated into the Powar caste, new clans may have emerged within the community.

This aligns with the process described in the "Origin" section, where some outsiders became part of the Powar caste, leading to the formation of new clans. The current family names within the caste indicate mixed ancestry, yet the original Rajput lineage remains evident in their fair skin, prominent foreheads, and often grey eyes. The Powars still tend to maintain relationships with women from lower castes more frequently than usual, a trait shared with other mixed-origin castes. This has led to them sometimes being referred to as *Dhakar*, a term connoting illegitimacy.

Despite centuries among Marathi speakers, the Powars have retained their own dialect, called Powari. This language is categorized as Eastern Hindi and is most closely related to Bagheli. However, if they truly came from Malwa, their language should resemble Malvi more, as other castes that migrated from Malwa typically carried Malvi with them, even if in a broken form.

In the 18th century, some Powars served in the military under the Marathas at Nagpur, accompanying a Bhonsale general on an expedition to Cuttack. As a reward, they received grants of undeveloped land in the Wainganga River valley, where they honed their skills in construction. An inscription attributed to a ruler of Dhar records the third repair of temples in Winj Basini, near the statue.

Customs and Rituals

As demonstrated, the Powars have largely abandoned many distinctive Rajput customs. They do not wear the sacred thread and allow both divorce and the remarriage of widows. They permit polygamy and are not particularly strict regarding sexual offenses within the caste. However, they bitterly resent and, if able, heavily avenge any attempt

on the virtue of their women by an outsider. On the other hand, the men of the caste are somewhat notorious for the freedom with which they enter into relationships with women of other castes.

In earlier times, the sale of widows was also practiced by some of them. The disposal of widows did not rest with their parents but with the *Shende*, or headman of the caste. For example, the Karun Powar of Tumsar, who was empowered by the Bhonsale kings of Nagpur to oversee such matters, customarily received an average sum of Rs. 25 for each widow or divorced woman whom he gave away in marriage.

Their diet includes goat, fowl, wild pig, game birds, and fish, though they refrain from alcohol except during ceremonial occasions, such as the worship of Narayan Deo, where its consumption is mandatory for all. They are comfortable drinking water from a Gond's hand and, in some areas, even consuming cooked food prepared by them. This stems from their close ties in agriculture, as Gonds often serve as farmhands for Powar cultivators. In the past, Powar women consumed red and white clay, believing it would ensure their children were born with red and white complexions.

Typically, a Brahmin officiates their ceremonies, although his presence is not essential, as a caste member can assume his duties if necessary. Every Powar, male or female, has a guru—either a Brahmin, Gosain, or Bairagi—who occasionally visits to conduct rituals. During these visits, a sacred space is prepared using lines of wheat flour, where the guru and disciple sit on wooden stools, their heads covered with new cloth as the guru imparts wisdom. Sweetmeats and gifts are exchanged, and the disciple presents the guru with one to five rupees.

When a Powar is ostracized, two feasts—known as *Maili* and *Chokhi Roti* (impure and pure food)—must be held for reinstatement. The first feast takes place in the morning by a tank or riverbank and is attended solely by men.

The Powars venerate typical Hindu deities, with Dulha Deo serving as their household god. He is symbolized by a nut and date wrapped in cloth and hung on a wall peg above a dedicated platform. Annually, or during significant life events such as marriage or the birth of a first child, a goat is offered to Dulha Deo. It is important to note that the Powars worship Dulha deo, a deity mainly worshipped by tribal communities. After marking its forehead with red ochre and pouring water over it, the animal is sacrificed once it shivers, which is believed to signal acceptance by the deity. The family consumes the flesh, while the skin and bones are buried beneath the floor.

Narayan Deo, Vishnu, or the Sun is represented by peacock feathers and typically resides in a Mahar's house. During worship, he is brought in a gourd to the Powars' house, where offerings of a black goat, rice, and cakes are presented. A Mahar performs the rituals while the offering is made. After consuming the goat's or pig's flesh, he is allowed to partake in the feast inside the Powars' house, with the Powars following suit. Normally, a Mahar is not permitted inside their home, and any Powar who shares a meal with them would face caste expulsion. This rite likely acknowledges the Mahars as the original inhabitants before the Powars' arrival.

The Turk, Farid, and Rehmat septs of the Powars observe a similar form of worship dedicated to Baba Farid, the Muhammadan saint of Girar. Represented by a bundle of peacock feathers, he is honored with a goat sacrifice. A Muslim performs the ritual slaughter and is the first to partake of the flesh. This suggests that these septs may have Muslim origins, having converted to Hinduism in the past while continuing to venerate Muhammadan saints.

When a man is killed by a tiger (*Bagh*), he is venerated as Bagh Deo. A small hut is constructed in the yard of his home, where an image of a tiger is placed and worshipped annually on the anniversary of his death. The family refrains from harming tigers afterward, believing the animal to have become one of their own.

Similarly, if a man succumbs to a cobra bite (*Nag*), he is honored as Nag Deo. A representation of a snake, crafted from silver or iron, is revered, and his family refrains from killing snakes. If death results from another animal attack, drowning, or a fall from a tree, the deceased is worshipped as Ban Deo, the forest deity, through comparable rituals. In this case, a symbolic mound of rice and red lead represents the spirit.

These traditions reflect the belief, as noted by Sir James Frazer, that spirits of those who die sudden or unnatural deaths are particularly malevolent and must be appeased with offerings to prevent misfortune. Frazer illustrates a similar practice among the Karens of Burma in *Psyche's Task*, where food offerings of red, yellow, and white rice are left in the forest to pacify the spirits of those who died from accidents, hunger, disease, or violence.

A ritual known as the Khir Chatai ceremony is performed when a child reaches approximately two years of age. On Diwali, the child is invited to a relative's home and given *khir*—a dish of freshly harvested rice cooked with milk and sugar. This act is believed to formally integrate the child into the caste, much like ear-piercing ceremonies in other communities.

Cremation is the customary funeral practice. The deceased is placed on a stack of cow dung cakes, which are also used to cover the body along with butter, sugar, and linseed. The chief mourner, usually the son, carries the sacred fire in an earthen pot and ignites the pyre. After cremation, the ashes are scattered in water, while the bones are kept by the chief mourner. Some may be temporarily buried under a mango or pipal tree before being immersed in the sacred Narmada River at a later time. The barber performs a ritual shaving of the mourner's head, and in return, he may receive a gift, such as a rupee or a cow.

Following the removal of the body, the home is thoroughly cleaned, and the broom and dustpan are discarded outside the village. Before

the body is taken away, the widow of the deceased places her hands on his chest and forehead, and another widow breaks her bangles as a symbol of mourning.

The Shraddh ceremony is held annually in the month of Kunvvar (September), on the same lunar day as the person's passing. The head of the household invites guests by placing grains of rice on their foreheads, and they are expected to fast until the ritual is complete. The next day, at noon, the host—wearing a sacred thread of twisted grass—performs a ritual foot-washing for the guests using water infused with *kushti* grass. Their foreheads are marked with sandal paste and rice. A small quantity of cooked rice is placed on leaf plates inside the house, gathered, and then tossed onto the roof while the host's wife sprinkles water, calling out the name of the deceased. Afterward, the attendees share a meal together.

Beliefs regarding the treatment of the dead vary across the Central Provinces. Among communities that traditionally practice cremation, those who die violently or from diseases like smallpox or leprosy are typically buried. Whether burial is thought to prevent spirits from wandering or if such bodies are considered too impure for cremation remains unclear. However, cremation remains the norm, with exceptions for those who met unnatural deaths or were believed to be possessed by the goddess Devi. Infants who pass away before undergoing the Khir Chatai ceremony are also buried instead of cremated.

Powar women wear their clothing in the Hindustani style rather than the Maratha fashion. They adorn their legs, hands, and faces with tattoos, often featuring simple dots on the face, which are thought to enhance beauty—similar to the beauty marks once popular in England. The Saugor poet Paclmakar, as cited by Mr. Hira Lal, poetically compared a dot on a woman's chin to a black bee nestled within a half-ripe mango.

Clan structure (36-Clans)

1. Ambule / Ambulya / Amule
2. Baghel / Baghele
3. Bhagat / Bhaktvarti
4. Bhairam / Bhairav / Kalbhairam / Kalbhairav
5. Bhoyar
6. Bisen / Bisan / Bisane / Bisone / Bisne
7. Bopche / Bopchi / Bopchya
8. Chauhan / Chavhan / Chavan
9. Chaudhary
10. Dala / Parihar
11. Turk / Turkh / Turkar / Turak / Turakar
12. Gautam
13. Hanwat / Hanwate / Hanumate
14. Jaitwar / Jaitawar
15. Katre / Shende / Deshmukh
16. Kolhe / Kole / Koli / Kohle / Kohli / Kolhi
17. Kshirsagar / Sagar
18. Patle / Patel / Wadaskar / Deshmukh
19. Parihar
20. Pardhi / Pardhe / Pardhikar / Paraskar
21. Pund / Punde / Phund / Phunde
22. Rahangdale / Rangdale
23. Rinayat / Rinahate / Ranhate

24. Rana / Rane / Ranekar
25. Raut / Rawat
26. Sharnagat / Shernagat / Surnagat
27. Sahare / Shahare
28. Sonwane / Sonawane
29. Thakre / Thakur
30. Tembhre / Tembhare / Temre
31. Hirankhede / Harinkhede
32. Farid
33. Rehmat
34. Randive / Randiva
35. Rajhans
36. Yede / Ede / Yedekar / Edekar

The Powar caste consist of these 36 exogamous sections and they only marry within these sections. It is claimed by some Powars that only 30 or 32 of these clans migrated to the Central Provinces, while the remaining few clans either remained in Malwa or have become extinct.

As discussed in the origin section, the Powars are generally regarded as having Rajput ancestry, particularly from the Parmar clan of the Agnivanshi Rajputs. However, over time, their lineage became significantly mixed due to regional integration and intermarriage with non-Rajput groups. While their Rajput roots are acknowledged, many of their thirty-six clans likely have non-Rajput origins. This has led to their classification in historical accounts as a socially degraded Rajput group due to their mixed ancestry.

Raghuvanshi (Raghvi)

The Raghuvansi, also known as the Raghvi, is a Hindu caste that traces its lineage to a small group of degraded Raghuvanshi Rajputs. They are primarily settled in districts of Madhya Pradesh and in Maharashtra, where they are known as Raghvi. They claim affiliation with the Kshatriya varna in the Hindu Vedic system, identifying themselves with the warrior and ruling classes. Their primary occupation is agriculture.

Origins and Ancestry

According to their own accounts, a small band of Raghuvanshi Rajputs migrated from Ayodhya and settled in Hoshangabad, eventually spreading to nearby districts of Madhya Pradesh. It is stated that when these Raghuvanshi Rajputs first arrived in this new region, for reasons not specifically recorded in history, Rajputs of other clans refused to give their daughters in marriage to them. As a result, they developed various gotras (exogamous sections) among themselves and began marrying only within those gotras, leading to the development of a distinct caste of Rajputs who marry within their own community but with members of different gotras, and not with Rajputs of other clans.

Some scholars believe that they may have descended from Raghuvanshi Rajput fathers and mothers of an inferior caste or indigenous tribe, which led to the formation of a separate caste. Therefore, the Raghuvanshi caste and the Raghuvanshi Rajputs are different in this regard. They are regarded as inferior to the northern Raghuvanshi Rajputs, who are considered to have pure blood.

Both theories of origin are equally acknowledged, but the first one is more widely accepted by the people of this community. Due to this, they claim to be pure Rajputs—sometimes a claim that is also accepted by other communities in their locality.

In “Gonds of the Central Indian Highlands, Vol. II,” it is stated regarding the Raghuvanshi caste that:

“The first citizen and the founder of Chhindwara town, the nearest old town near Tamia before the coal mines created the Parasia town, was a Rajput who did not belong to any one of the thirty-six founding clans of the Rajputs, mentioned by Captain Tod in his Study of Rajasthan. This Raghuvanshi patriarch belonged to a Rajput extended family, a product of Rajput-tribal marriage. The Raghuvanshis are said to belong to one of the Rajput clans that was a result of inter-marriage between a Rajput clan and the tribals. In this case it was most probably a Gond tribe.”

According to this, the founder of Chhindwara was a Raghuvanshi Rajput (Raghvi) of mixed heritage—born from a Rajput-tribal union, likely with a Gond woman. Unlike the northern Raghuvanshi Rajputs (Raghavs), who claim pure Kshatriya descent and strictly adhere to Rajput customs, the Raghvis of Chhindwara evolved as a distinct community shaped by local tribal influences.

They have abandoned their former high Rajput status after mixing with other castes and tribes and now rank alongside other cultivating castes of respectable status. The Raghuvanshis are ranked similarly to other cultivating castes like the Daharias, Jadams, and Powars, who are also descended from the Rajputs. All these castes are referred to as degraded Rajputs due to their mixed origin.

The Raghuvanshi (Raghvi) caste of the Central Provinces should not be confused with the Raghuvanshi (Raghav) clan of Rajputs found in North India. The Raghuvanshi Rajputs of North India marry within the broader Rajput community, following exogamy based on clan and gotra, and are thus considered pure-blooded Rajputs. In contrast, the Raghuvanshi (Raghvi) caste has over 80 (gotras) exogamous sections through which they maintain marital relations strictly within their caste.

It is further mentioned in the same book that:

"It is very significant that there is a close resemblance between the origin and growth of Hindu society, and the origin and growth of Gond society. Similar origins and growth of other tribes, especially the Nagas, Bhils, and so on, are possible. In all such cases a number of tribes bear a common name. If the studies of Captain Tod, Forbes, Russell and other tribes are taken into account then even the Rajput society is made of large units. Captain Tod has mentioned 36 Rajput clans; but according to Russell some of the main Rajput groups are the result of tribal and Rajput marriages. He especially mentions the Raghuvanshis who belong to the Chhindwara district. The first resident of Chhindwara town is said to be a Raghuvansh. It is, therefore, evident that the vast society, known as Hindu society, is made of numerous large societies, and some of them consist of aboriginal and mixed tribes. Some of these groups, like the Gonds, for example, are known by a single name."

According to Russell, some of the main Rajput groups in the Central Provinces are the result of marriages between tribal people and Rajputs. He makes this observation in reference to the mixed-origin Rajput tribes settled in the Central Provinces of India.

The Raghuvanshi (Raghvi) caste is one example of these mixed-origin Rajput tribes. It is important to note that, through this process, a single Rajput clan became divided into nearly 80 gotras, which now intermarry. There is also a possibility that, among these 80 gotras, only some are of Raghuvanshi Rajput origin, while others may have originated from different Rajput clans or other castes. If we are to conclude the origin of this caste, it can be said that it is undoubtedly of Rajput descent. However, due to their mixing with other castes and tribes, their Rajput blood became impure. Thus, they cannot be considered pure Rajputs. Further research is ongoing regarding their origin.

Migration and Settlement

Originally from Ayodhya, they migrated to Hoshangabad to escape religious persecution during the Muslim invasions, particularly under Aurangzeb. They sought refuge in this area, which was free from Muslim control and considered a safe haven. After settling in Hoshangabad, they spread across various districts in Madhya Pradesh, and some even settled in Maharashtra.

Kumar Suresh Singh writes about the statement of Russell and Hiralal in his book “Maharashtra” from the “People of India” series that:

“Russell and Hiralal (1916) state that the Raghvi are a queer class, all professing to be Rajputs from Ayodhya, though on cross examination they are obliged to confess that they did not come here straight from Ayodhya, but stopped in Bundelkhand and the Gwalior territory on the way. They marry only among themselves but when they get wealthy and influential they assume the sacred thread and stop all familiarity with the Gujar and the Kirar. From Hoshangabad they have spread to Betul, Chhindwara and Nagpur (Russell and Hiralal, 1916)”

According to Russell and Hiralal (1916), the Raghvi are a distinct group who claim Rajput ancestry from Ayodhya. However, they admit to having passed through Bundelkhand and the Gwalior region before settling in their current area, which casts doubt on their direct origin from Ayodhya. They marry only within their own community. When some among them become wealthy and influential, they adopt upper-caste customs such as wearing the sacred thread and distancing themselves from lower-status groups like the Gujar and Kirar. Originally based in Hoshangabad, they later spread to Betul, Chhindwara, and Nagpur.

Over time, interaction with Maharashtrians influenced their culture, lifestyle, and attire, giving rise to their identity as the Raghvi. They have

lived in this region for over 400 years and are now mainly settled in districts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Subdivisions and Community Structure

The Raghvi community is divided into two main subgroups: **Badafad** and **Chotafad**. These divisions emerged after the death of a highly respected sadhu, Bua Saheb, who greatly influenced the community's adoption of non-violence and vegetarianism. Following his passing, his followers separated into two factions: one group, led by Bua Saheb's son, Rao Bua Saheb, formed the Badafad, while another group, guided by Dhamada Mata, created the Chotafad.

Rituals and Ceremonies

Before marriage, the *Janeu* ceremony is held, during which a priest places a sacred thread on the boy. The marriage ceremonies include *Pathoni Lagnapuja*, *Mandwa Dalna* (setting up a wedding pavilion), and *Bhanwar Ghumna*, during which the bride and groom walk around a sacred pole seven times. Marriages are usually planned according to the Hindu almanac, with no weddings taking place in July, August, September, or October.

Regarding death customs, the Raghvi community buries their deceased in agricultural land in cases of natural death, whereas those who die unnaturally, such as from drowning or poisoning, are cremated. After burial, the land is left unused for a year. A ten-day period of mourning is observed following a death, with a *Tervi* ceremony held on the 13th day.

Generally, divorce is not common in their society. In their community, a widower is allowed to remarry, but a widow or a female divorcee is not permitted to do so. They are expected to spend the rest of their

lives alone. Only the husband can initiate a divorce, and the children of divorced couples typically remain with the father.

Occupation and Economic Life

Agriculture has traditionally been the primary occupation of the Raghvi community, with crops such as cotton, sugarcane, wheat, rice, and various fruits being cultivated. Some members also engage in the sale of milk and dairy products or work as agricultural laborers. The community is actively involved in local governance, with some members participating in the *gram panchayat*.

Religion and Belief Systems

Religiously, the Raghvi community follows Hinduism and is divided into two sects: *Kabir Panthi* and *Bua Panthi*. Followers of *Kabir Panthi* reject pilgrimages and the worship of village deities, while *Bua Panthi* followers adhere to the teachings of Bua Saheb. The community celebrates key Hindu festivals such as Diwali, Pola, and Dussehra.

They worship all Hindu deities, with Lord Ram as their principal deity, since they claim descent from the Raghuvansh lineage, to which Lord Ram belonged. Some families remain quite orthodox and still do not permit inter-caste marriages. Each Raghuvanshi takes pride in their lineage, and many greet each other with 'Jai Shree Ram.' This greeting not only reflects their devotion but also reinforces a shared sense of identity and heritage. Religious festivals, especially Ram Navami and Dasahra, are celebrated with great enthusiasm and traditional rituals.

Since evolving into a distinct caste, they have gradually abandoned many of their traditional Rajput customs and practices, adopting instead the local customs and cultural norms of the regions where they settled. This shift reflects a broader process of assimilation and adaptation to their changing social environment.

Examples of some communities whose claims of Rajput/Kshatriya descent are rarely accepted—sometimes only by themselves—and are very unlikely to be true include:

1. **Maratha** – They claim descent from Rajputs, but this is not accepted by anyone outside their own community. Originally classified as Shudras, the Maratha caste comprises 96 clans formed over earlier centuries through the amalgamation of families from the peasant (Kunbi), shepherd (Dhangar), blacksmith (Lohar), pastoralist (Gavli), carpenter (Sutar), Bhandari, Thakar, and Koli castes in Maharashtra. Many took to military service in the 16th century under the Deccan Sultanates or the Mughals. While a few clans may have some Rajput blood, it cannot be considered pure, as the Marathas are of mixed origin and primarily of Shudra descent. Clans like Bhosale, Pawar, Jadhav, Chavhan, and More claim descent from Sisodia, Panwar, Jadaun, Chauhan, and Mori Rajputs respectively, but these claims are not supported by genuine genealogies or historical evidence. Most of today's available Maratha genealogies were fabricated in the past to link them with Rajputs. These assertions were likely made to attain Kshatriya status and improve social standing by adopting Rajput clan names.
2. **Ahir, Gaoli, and other such communities** – They claim descent from the Chandravanshi–Yaduvanshi lineage and have adopted the Yadav surname.
3. **Aphariya Ahir** – A subcaste of Ahirs. They claim descent from Jadaun Rajputs, a branch of the Yaduvanshi lineage of Rajputs.
4. **Dauwa Ahir** – A subcaste of Ahirs. They claim to be descendants of a Bundela Rajput father and an Ahir caste mother.
5. **Phatak Ahir** – A subcaste of Ahirs. They claim descent from the Sisodia Rajputs of Mewar, a branch of the Suryavanshi lineage of Rajputs.

6. **Kosaliya Ahir** – A subcaste of Ahirs. They claim ancestry from the Tomar Rajputs, a branch of the Chandravanshi lineage of Rajputs.
7. **Sorathia Ahir** – A subcaste of Ahirs. They claim descent from Rao Navaghana, a Chudasama Rajput.
8. **Lodhi** – They claim descent from Chandravanshi Rajputs and often refer to themselves as "Lodhi-Rajput."
9. **Kushwaha** (also known as Kachhi, Mali, Marar, Saini, Sonkar, Murai, Shakya, Maurya, Koeri, and Panara) – They claim Rajput descent, though this is accepted only within their own community.
10. **Mahyavanshi** – They claim descent from Parmar Rajputs and underwent a social mobility movement during the 20th century to assert Kshatriya status.
11. **Dholewar Kurmi** – A subgroup of Kurmis claiming Rajput ancestry, possibly to uplift their social position through Sanskritization.
12. **Jat / Jatt** – Claim Kshatriya descent.
13. **Sinsinwar Jat** – They claim descent from a Jadaun Rajput father and a Jat concubine mother and identify themselves with Yaduvanshi Kshatriya status.
14. **Phulkian Jat** – This royal Jat dynasty (e.g., Patiala, Nabha, Jind) claims descent from the Bhati Rajputs of Jaisalmer, a branch of the Yaduvanshi lineage of Rajputs.
15. **Dalal Jat** – Claims descent from Rathore Rajputs, a branch of the Suryavanshi lineage of Rajputs.
16. **Khatri** – Claims Kshatriya descent.
17. **Kayastha** – Claims Kshatriya descent.
18. **Gujjar** – Claims Kshatriya descent.

19. **Sagar Rajputs (Dhangar)** – Robert Eric Frykenberg states that they were originally from the Shudra varna and successfully changed their status to twice-born by employing genealogists after improvements in their economic conditions. They adopted the name “Sagar Rajputs” and began wearing the sacred thread. However, they do not have any genealogical or historical evidence to support claims of Rajput origin. This appears to be merely an attempt at Rajputization to assert a higher social status, even though they remain Shudras, not Rajputs.

20. **Mair Rajputs (Sonar)** – Originally from the Sonar (goldsmith) community, they claimed Rajput status as part of Sanskritization. However, they are either Vaishya or Shudra by varna.

21. **Kashyap Rajputs (Koshyal or Kanshilya)** – They claim Rajput descent, but this is not accepted by other communities.

22. **Teli Rathore** – They claim descent from Rathore Rajputs, a branch of the Suryavanshi lineage of Rajputs.

23. **Noniya (Lonia)** – They claim descent from Chauhan Rajputs, a branch of the Agnivanshi lineage of Rajputs.

24. **Kirar** – Claims to be degraded Rajputs.

25. **Bhilala and some other similar tribal communities** – They claim descent from mixed Rajput and tribal lineages.

Many of these castes, tribes, and similar communities claim Rajput descent either because they believe themselves to be illegitimate or collateral descendants of Rajput lineages, or as a means of elevating their social status within the traditional caste hierarchy. These claims are often part of broader efforts to gain recognition as Kshatriyas and to improve their standing in society through processes such as Sanskritization and upward social mobility. Many of these communities—mostly Jats, Gujars, Ahirs, and Lodhis—also adopted

Rajput titles, while simultaneously claiming Rajput kings and rulers as their own, rather than acknowledging them as part of the Rajput caste. Though many communities claim Rajput descent, it is not possible to mention all of them; hence, only some have been mentioned above.

Refrences

1. Pandey, Gaya. *Indian Anthropology*. India: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Limited, 2022.
2. Naravane, M. S. *The Rajputs of Rajputana: A Glimpse of Medieval Rajasthan*. India: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 1999.
3. Bhattacharya, Manoshi. *The Royal Rajputs: Strange Tales and Stranger Truths*. India: Rupa & Company, 2008.
4. Bingley, Alfred Horsford. *Hand-Book on Rajputs: History and Origin, Geographical Distribution, Religion, Custom, and Festivals*. India: Manohar Publishers, 2023.
5. Maharotra, R. C. *Balaghat Jile Ki Jan Boliyo Ka Bhashavaigyanik Avam Sanskritik Adhyayan*. 1995.
6. Asopa, Jai Narayan. *Origin of the Rajputs*. India: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1976.
7. Tod, James. *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajast̓han: Or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*. India: Indian Publication Society, 1899.
8. Russell, Robert Vane, and Rai Bahir Hira Lāl. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*. Vol. II. London: Macmillan & Co., 1916.
9. The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India: Ethnological Study of the Caste System. N.p.: e-artnow, 2022.
10. Russell, R. V.. The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India I. Germany: anboco, 2016.
11. "Kalachuris of Tripuri." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, last modified June 2025.
12. "Kalachuris of Ratnapura." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, last modified July 2025.
13. "Kalachuri Dynasty." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
14. “Daharia Caste Definition.” *DesiGoogly*.
15. Russell, Robert Vane, and Hira Lāl. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*. Vols. I & III. London: Macmillan & Co., 1916.
16. "Jadam." *Indpaedia*.
17. Russell, R. V. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1916.
18. “Ponwars in Nagpur.” *Nitesh Bhagat’s Blog*, December 17, 2016.

19. *Central Provinces District Gazetteer: Balaghat District*. Volume A. By C. E. Low, ICS. Nagpur: Government Press, 1908.

20. "Powar: History of Wainganga Panwar Settlements." *Slideshare* (Hindi), accessed June 2025.

21. Utkarsh, P. (2022b). □□□□□-□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ *(□□□□□)* □□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□. www.academia.edu.

22. Utkarsh, P. (2024b). □□□□□ *(□□□□□)* □□□□ □□ □□□□□ □□ □□□□ □□□□□□. www.academia.edu.

23. Utkarsh, P. (2025b). □□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□ *(□□□□□)* □□□□. www.academia.edu.

24. Utkarsh, P. (2025b). □□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ *(□□□□□)* □□□□ *[Madhyabharat me Panwar (Powar) Samaj]*. □□□ □□□□□ (IRS). www.academia.edu.

25. Russell, R. V. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*. Vol. IV. London: Macmillan & Co., 1916 — "Raghuvansi (Raghvi)" section.

26. "Raghuvanshi (caste)." *EverybodyWiki Bios & Wiki*, November 1, 2024.

27. Craddock (colonial officer cited in Russell) — remark on cultivator character and agricultural status.

28. Mehta, Behram H. *Gonds of the Central Indian Highlands: A Study of the Dynamics of Gond Society*. India: Concept, 1984.

29. *Gonds of the Central Indian Highlands*. Vol II. N.p.: Concept Publishing Company, (n.d.).

30. *Maharashtra*. India: Anthropological Survey of India, 2004.

31. Singhji, Virbhadra. The Rajputs of Saurashtra. India: Popular Prakashan, 1994.

32. Harlan, Lindsey. Religion and Rajput Women: The Ethic of Protection in Contemporary Narratives. United States: University of California Press, 2024.

33. Sherring, Matthew Atmore. Hindu Tribes and Castes: The tribes and castes of the Punjab and its frontier, The tribes and castes of the Central Provinces and Berar, The tribes and castes of the Bombay Presidency, The tribes and castes of the Province and frontiers of Scinde. India: Thacker, Spink & Company, 1879.

34. Sherring, Matthew A.. Hindu Tribes and Castes: As Represented in Benares ; with Illustrations. India: Thacker, 1879.

35. Bhattacharya, Jogendra Nath. Hindu Castes and Sects: An Exposition of the Origin of the Hindu Caste System and the Bearing of the Sects Towards Each Other and Towards Other Religious Systems. India: Thacker, Spink, 1896.

36. Sherring, Matthew Atmore. Hindu Tribes and Castes. India: Thacker, Spink & Company, 1872.

37. Bapu, Prabhu. Hindu Mahasabha in Colonial North India, 1915-1930: Constructing Nation and History. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013.

38. Ibbetson, Denzil. Panjab Castes: Being a Reprint of the Chapter on "The Races, Castes, and Tribes of the People" in the Report on the Census of the Panjab. India: Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, 1916.

39. A Glossary of the Tribes & Castes of the Punjab & North-west Frontier Province: Based on the Census Report for the Punjab, 1883, by the Late Sir Denzil Ibbetson ... & the Census Report for the Punjab, 1892, by Sir Edward Maclagan ... & Comp. by H.A. Rose .... India: Superintendent, government printing, Punjab, 1914.

40. Srivastava, Kamal Shankar. Origin and Development of Class and Caste in India. India: Sangeeta Prakashan, 1998.

41. Gordon, Stewart. The Marathas 1600-1818. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

42. Barbosa, Thiago P.. Racializing Caste: Anthropology Between Germany and India and the Legacy of Irawati Karve (1905-1970). Austria: De Gruyter, 2025.

43. Thurston, Edgar., Rangachari, K.. Castes and Tribes of Southern India. India: Asian Educational Services, 2001.

44. A. Kincaid, C.., Bahadur D. B. Parasnis, Rao. A History of the Maratha People (Volume II). India: Alpha Editions, 2020.

45. Enthoven, Reginald Edward. The Tribes and Castes of Bombay. India: Asian Educational Services, 1990.

46. Tyagi, Vidya Prakash. Martial races of undivided India. India: Kalpaz Publications, 2009.

47. Varma, Kumar Cheda Singh. Kshatriyas and Would-be Kshatriyas: A Consideration of the Claims of Certain Hindu Castes to Rank with the Rajputs, the Descendants of the Ancient Kshatriyas. India: Printed at the Pioneer Press, 1904.

48. Kshatriyas And Would-be Kshatriyas: A Consideration Of The Claims Of Certain Hindu Castes To Rank With The Rájputs, The Descendants Of The Ancient Kshatriyas. United States: Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2018.

49. Puri, Baij Nath. The Khatris, a Socio-cultural Study. India: M.N. Publishers and Distributors, 1988.

50. Gupta, Chitrarekha. The Kāyasthas : a study in the formation and early history of a caste. India: K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1996.